

# Host proteins involved in HIV infection: New therapeutic targets

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#### **Host proteins involved in HIV infection: New therapeutic targets**

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#### 27ABSTRACT

28Current treatment of HIV/AIDS consists of a combination of three to five agents targeting 29different viral proteins, i.e. the Reverse Transcriptase, Protease, Integrase and Envelope, 30and aims to suppress viral replication below detectable levels. This "highly active 31antiretroviral therapy" (HAART) has brought an enormous benefit for life expectancy and 32quality in HIV-1-infected individuals, at least in industrialized countries. However, significant 33limitations with regard to efficiency, drug-resistance, side-effect and costs still exist. Recent 34data suggest that cellular factors also represent useful targets for therapy. Here, we 35summarize findings from several genome-wide screens that identified a large number of 36cellular factors exploited by HIV-1 at each step of its life cycle. Furthermore, we discuss the 37evidence that humans are equipped with powerful intrinsic defense mechanisms against 38retroviruses but that HIV-1 has evolved elaborate ways to counteract or evade them. 39Preventing the use of host-cell proteins obligatory for viral replication or strengthening the 40cellular defense mechanisms may help to reduce viral replication to harmless levels. A better 41understanding of the host factors that promote or restrict HIV-1 replication may thus lead to 42the development of novel therapeutics against HIV/AIDS.

#### 431. Introduction

44 Currently, more than 25 antiretroviral drugs are available to treat human 45 immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. The great majority of them target the HIV-1 reverse 46transcriptase (RT) (nucleoside and nucleotide RT inhibitors: zidovudine, didanosine, 47zalcitabine, stavudine, lamivudine, abacavir, emtricitabine and tenofovir and non-nucleoside 48RT inhibitors: nevirapine, delavirdine, efavirenz and etravirine) and the viral protease 49(saquinavir, ritonavir, indinavir, nelfinavir, amprenavir, lopinavir, atazanavir, fosamprenavir, 50tipranavir and darunavir) (Fig. 1). More recently, antiretroviral drugs that inhibit the viral 51 integrase (IN) (raltegravir) or the six-helix bundle core formation of the gp41 transmembrane 52protein required for virus-cell fusion (enfuvirtide), have been approved for the clinic [1]. While 53this growing repertoire of antiretroviral agents is impressive, none of these drugs is useful for 54the treatment of HIV/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) on its own because HIV-551 is highly variable and capable of developing resistance against all of them. This high 56genetic variability provided the rationale for the development of "highly active antiretroviral 57therapy" (HAART) consisting of combinations of three or more antiretroviral agents. HAART 58 aims to suppress viral replication to such low levels that the emergence of drug-resistant 59HIV-1 variants is prevented. Furthermore, while the diverse HIV-1 species (called quasi-60species) found in a single individual will most likely already contain the genetic changes 61 reducing its susceptibility to single drugs, it is more difficult for the virus (and sometimes 62associated with decreased "fitness") to acquire the complex combination of mutations 63 required for multi-drug resistance.

Treatment of HIV-1-infected individuals by HAART usually allows to reduce the plasma 65viral load to undetectable levels, improves CD4+ T cell counts, delays disease progression 66and promotes survival. However, although the development of HAART was certainly the 67greatest success of AIDS research and allows the reduction of morbidity and mortality 68wherever it is available, it also has major limitations. Furthermore, HAART is expensive and 69requires an infrastructure with a functional health care system allowing the medical 70monitoring of the success of antiretroviral therapy to prevent or at least delay the emergence 71of drug-resistant HIV-1 strains. The vast majority of the ~34 million people currently infected 72with HIV-1 live in developing countries and – although access to antiretroviral drugs in the 73developing world is improving – most of them still do not have access to antiretroviral therapy 74[2, 3]. Thus, while HAART constitutes an effective approach for the treatment of AIDS and 75also prevents HIV-1 transmission by reducing the viral loads, it still has little impact on the 76global spread of the virus (~2.5 million new HIV infections per year) and the global number of 77fatalities caused by AIDS (~2 million per year). Life expectancy has drastically fallen in some

78countries that are most severely affected by HIV/AIDS, e.g. in Zimbabwe it is only 34 years 79for women and 37 years for men [2]. Even under optimal conditions, HAART has significant 80drawbacks, e.g. it is frequently associated with significant side effects (such as metabolic and 81cardiovascular disorders), with immune reconstitution disease, and with the development of 82resistant HIV-1 strains (particularly in the case of patients' non-adherence to treatment). 83Furthermore, HAART requires life-long daily treatment because it does not allow integrated 84proviruses to be eliminated from resting long-lived cells and thus fails to eradicate the virus 85entirely.

86 Because of the drawbacks of current combination antiretroviral therapy it remains a 87 major interest to develop new antiretroviral drugs or innovative therapies to reduce undesired 88side-effects, to prevent the emergence of drug resistance or even to attack the viral 89 reservoirs [4,5]. Indeed, a major barrier to curing HIV infection remains the ability of HIV to 90integrate in the host genome and remain latent. The thus-generated viral reservoirs cause 91 viral rebound upon HAART interruption and impose life-long antiretroviral therapy with its 92many associated side-effects and possible development of resistance. Here, we focus on 93approaches aiming to target cellular rather than viral proteins. It is long known that HIV-1 94utilizes host factors at many steps of its life cycle. However, currently only a single drug 95targeting a cellular protein has been approved for the clinic: Maraviroc binds to the HIV-1 96entry cofactor CCR5 and blocks its interaction with the viral envelope gp120 to prevent the 97membrane fusion events necessary for viral entry [6]. Recent studies using genome-wide 98screening technologies have identified large numbers of host factors that may be required for 99virus replication and thus represent potential therapeutic targets [7-9]. Another recent 100 development is the realization that humans are equipped with factors that directly inhibit 101 retroviruses [10, 11]. For example, tripartite motif 5-alpha (TRIM5α) proteins can block 102 incoming retroviral capsids in a species-specific manner [12] and the cellular apolipoprotein 103B mRNA-editing enzyme, catalytic polypeptide-like 3 (APOBEC3) cytidine deaminase 104 induces lethal hypermutation of the viral genome [13]. Finally, the recently discovered 105restriction factor "tetherin" (also called BST-2, HM1.24 or CD317) inhibits HIV-1 particle 106release [14, 15]. These ancient antiviral defense mechanisms were obviously quite 107successful in past encounters with retroviruses, since about 8% of the human genome is of 108 retroviral origin [16]. HIV-1, however, has evolved the ability to counteract these by several 109" accessory" viral proteins (Viral infectivity factor (Vif), viral protein U (Vpu)) or can avoid them 110by its high variability and is thus capable to replicate efficiently in the hostile environment of 111the human cell [10, 11]. Strengthening these cellular defense mechanisms or weakening the 112viral antagonists may help to control HIV-1 replication.

#### 1142. Host factors as targets for antiretroviral therapy

#### 115 2.1 Targeting viral entry

All viruses are obligate intracellular parasites without an independent metabolism and 117thus strictly dependent on their target cells for reproduction. The first cellular factor shown to 118be required for HIV-1 replication is the primary viral CD4 receptor that has been discovered 119more than two decades ago and determines the viral tropism for CD4+ T cells and tissue 120macrophages [17]. A variety of strategies has been pursued to block the interaction between 121the external viral envelope glycoprotein gp120 and CD4. These include soluble CD4 or CD4 122mimics that seem to induce a non-functional conformation of gp120, small molecule inhibitors 123that target the conserved CD4-gp120 binding site, as well as CD4 antibodies [18]. One CD4 124antibody (TNX-355) has shown some beneficial effects in clinical studies [19] and seems to 125act synergistically with enfuvirtide (T20) that interacts with gp41 and blocks a later step in the 126viral entry process [20]. However, TNX-355 has the disadvantage that it is not orally 127bioavailable and currently no CD4 inhibitor has been approved for the clinic.

128 Ten years after the discovery of CD4 as primary receptor of HIV, the seven-129transmembrane G protein-coupled chemokine receptors CCR5 and CXCR4, were 130 discovered as critical coreceptors for HIV-1 entry [21-25]. Shortly thereafter, several groups 131 reported that a homozygous deletion in the CCR5 allele ( $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$ ), naturally occurring in 132about 1% of the Caucasian population, protects against HIV-1 infection and is not associated 133 with significant immunological dysfunction [26-28]. Moreover, it was observed that 134heterozygous deletions in CCR5 are associated with delayed disease progression (27-29]. 135Altogether, these results suggested that CCR5 is a promising cellular target for anti-HIV 136therapy because its blockade should be well-tolerated and effective in inhibiting CCR5-tropic 137(R5) HIV-1 strains. Initially, several modified forms of the natural CCL5/RANTES (Regulated 138upon Activation, Normal T cell Expressed and Secreted) ligand of CCR5 have been 139developed [30]. These agents compete with the HIV-1 gp120 for CCR5 binding and some of 140them (e.g. PSC-RANTES) are highly effective in vitro and in the human peripheral blood 1411ymphocyte-Severe Combined Immunodeficient (SCID) mouse model [30, 31]. Although they 142 failed in clinical trials, PSC-RANTES is currently further evaluated as potential microbicide 143 against HIV [32, 33]. Another strategy was the development of small molecule inhibitors that 144bind to a hydrophobic pocket in CCR5 and seem to inhibit HIV infection by inducing 145conformational changes rather than by direct occupation of the gp120 binding site [18]. One 146of these inhibitors, Maraviroc, has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration 147(FDA) and the European Medicine Agency for the treatment of viremic patients harboring 148 multi-resistant HIV-1 strains. Thus, maraviroc is currently the only antiretroviral drug targeting 149a cellular factor used in the clinic [34]. However, several related agents, such as vicriviroc,

150and anti-CCR5 antibodies are currently evaluated in clinical trials [35, 36].

151 An alternative approach is the specific knock-down of CCR5 using RNA interference. 152Although this method usually only achieves partial knock-down of the target sequence, one 153study achieved the complete knock-out of CCR5 in hematopoietic stem cells using a stable 154RNA interference system, which then conferred resistance to HIV-1 infection to the in vitro 155derived macrophages [37]. More recently, the specific delivery of CCR5 siRNAs to T cells in 156a humanized mouse model was reported to suppress viremia and prevent CD4 T-cell 157depletion [38]. Work is underway to reduce induced cytotoxicities to adapt siRNA-mediated 158knock-down of CCR5 for clinical application. These strategies have recently obtained 159substantial impetus by the spectacular report of a  $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$  allogenic stem cell transplantation 160in an HIV-1 positive leukemia patient, which led to long-term control of viral replication (for 161more than 2 years) in the absence of antiretroviral therapy [39]. Since HIV-1 usually only 162 requires a few amino acid changes to switch from CCR5 to CXCR4 coreceptor usage [40], 163this is a highly unexpected and encouraging finding. The transplantation of CCR5-negative 164allogenic stem cells for the treatment of malignancies in HIV-1 positive patients holds some 165 promise, particularly if the worldwide bone marrow and cord blood donor banks agree to 166merge CCR5-screening information into one database system [41]. A more general approach 167would be to knock-down CCR5 in wild-type CD34+ stem cells using RNA interference before 168transplantation. In order to be successful, this approach would have to allow the specific 169 expansion of the transgenic cells in vivo since it is unlikely that gene transfer (of an siRNA 170 expressing cassette) is achieved in all cells of the transplant. However, HIV-1 may facilitate 171this selection by causing a specific depletion of CCR5-expressing cells.

172 Although the inhibition or knock-down of CCR5 using small inhibitor molecules or gene 173therapy transfer protocols is promising, it also has some drawbacks. One concern is that 174CCR5 may play a role in immunity against some pathogens [42]. Another disadvantage is 175that it is not active against X4 HIV-1 strains. Obviously, the best approach would be to 176combine CCR5 and CXCR4 inhibitors [43]. However, in contrast to CCR5, CXCR4 is 177essential for various physiological processes and its knock-out is lethal in mice [44, 45]. 178Several potent inhibitors of CXCR4, such as AMD3100 or AMD070, have been developed 179but clinical development was halted due to undesired side effects or lack of antiviral effects 180[1, 18]. Notably, however, AMD3100 has been approved by the FDA as a stem cell mobilizer 181for transplantation under different names (Plerixafor or Mozobil). Several new anti-CXCR4 182agents are in development and the CXCR4/SDF-1 pathway is emerging as an appealing 183target for the treatment of certain forms of cancer [46]. Thus, potent and better-tolerated 184CXCR4 inhibitors may become available in the future and complement antiretroviral 185therapies targeting CCR5.

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#### 186

#### 1872.2 Other cellular targets for antiretroviral therapy currently investigated

HIV-1 entry is a particularly promising step for intervention because it involves several 189relatively well-defined interactions in the cell membrane that can be blocked without the 190inhibitor entering the cells [47]. Furthermore, blocking HIV-1 at this early step prevents the 191integration of the proviral genome into that of the host cell and hence the establishment of 192latent viral reservoirs. However, the HIV-1 replication can in theory be inhibited at each step 193of its cycle in order to block viral spread. Thus, the inhibition of HIV-1 uncoating, reverse 194transcription, integration, transcription, assembly and release from the cell membrane (Fig. 1) 195all represent valid approaches to tackle HIV-1 infection and are currently being investigated.

An early therapeutic approach sought to target the HIV co-factors Tat and Rev, which are 196 197essential for viral replication and, to a large extent, functionally dependent on well-defined 198cellular factors [48]. Tat promotes the elongation of viral transcripts by binding to the 199transactivation response element (TAR) located in the HIV long-terminal repeat (LTR) and 200acts as an adaptor for the recruitment of the positive transcription elongation factor b (P-201TEFb) [49], which is a heterodimer of cyclin T1 and cyclin dependent kinase 9 (Cdk9). Since 202 recruitment of P-TEFb to the TAR is both necessary and sufficient for HIV-1 transcription 203[50], targeting P-TEFb may constitute a good approach for anti-HIV therapy. A number of 204small compounds that inhibit Cdk9 or cyclin T1 activities, or that disrupt the Tat/TAR/P-TEFb 205interaction have been tested [51, 52]. However, since P-TEFb is necessary for the 206transcription of many cellular genes [53], finding an inhibitor that exclusively blocks HIV 207transcription has proven difficult. Rev mediates the nuclear export of unspliced viral RNA 208through interaction with the cis-acting Rev response element (RRE) located in the HIV env 209gene [54, 55]. The shuttling of Rev between the nucleus and the cytoplasm is dependent on 210a number of cellular proteins, including the RNA helicase DDX3X, CRM1, Ran-GTP, as well 211as nucleoporins, importins and Sam 68 [54-56]. Targeting of DDX3X or other DEAD-box 212helicases by RNA interference has been reported to suppress Rev function and inhibit HIV 213 replication [57-59]. Interestingly, the Tat co-factor CCNT1/cyclin T1 and the Rev co-factor 214DDX3X were identified in two of the three siRNA screens of host factors implicated in HIV-1 215infection [7-9]. However, although Tat and Rev represent useful targets for antiretroviral drug 216development, no specific agents inhibiting them or their cellular cofactors without significant 217side effects have yet been developed.

The recent addition of an HIV-1 IN inhibitor (raltegravir) to the available HAART drugs 219 indicates that targeting proviral integration is a useful approach. HIV-1 IN interacts with a 220 cellular factor that may have potential as a therapeutic target: the cellular lens epithelium-221 derived growth factor (LEDGF)/p75 [60], a chromatin-associated protein that is important for

222HIV-1 integration [61]. Disruption of the interaction between HIV-1 IN and LEDGF/p75 leads 223to impaired viral replication [62]. The crystal structure of the interaction interface has been 224resolved [63, 64] and the development of a small inhibitor to preclude LEDGF/p75–IN binding 225is conceivable but remains challenging [65].

Although post-integration, the inhibition of particle budding from the plasma membrane 227and/or cell-to-cell transfer of the virus is a valid approach to prevent viral spread. HIV-1 228usurps the cellular Endosomal Sorting Complex Required for Transport I (ESCRT-I) for its 229release from infected cells [66-68]. In particular, the PTAP-type late domain of the HIV-1 Gag 230precursor polyprotein interacts with TSG101 (tumor susceptibility gene 101), a cellular 231protein normally involved in endosomal protein sorting, and inhibition of this interaction or 232depletion of TSG101 by RNA interference suppresses HIV-1 particle release [69-71]. One 233therapeutic approach would consist in developing molecules, which would mimic the viral 234PTAP motif, such as cyclic peptides [72]. Another potentially interesting interaction has also 235been identified between HIV-1 Gag and the endosomal sorting protein Alix [73, 74].

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#### 2372.3 Genome wide screens reveal numerous potential targets for antiretroviral therapy

Although many cellular factors were already known to be required for HIV infection, the 238 239 recent application of technological advances to the study of HIV infection revealed that we 240were actually only seeing the tip of the iceberg. Three independent genome-wide RNA 241interference-based screens evaluated more than 20,000 human genes for their relevance in 242infection [7-9]. Altogether, these studies identified a total of 842 genes that reduce HIV-1 243 infection when knocked-down. Another study used an alternative approach and genotyped a 244 large group of HIV-1-infected individuals to identify human genetic differences that influence 245the vulnerability to HIV-1 infection and clinical outcome of infection [75], thus adding a further 24663 genes to the list. Recently, the National Library of Medicine made available a 247comprehensive list of all cellular proteins shown to interact physically or functionally with HIV-2481 (HIV-1, Human Protein Interaction Database] [76-78]. Taken together, these studies and 249databases identified a total of 1,254 genes that may play a role in HIV-1 replication [79]. 250Many of these genes are involved in specific pathways (proteasomal targeting, transcription, 251immune response, RNA binding/splicing, chaperones etc.) that are usurped by HIV-1 252(summarized in Table 1).

253 The whole-genome siRNA screens, which expand the information brought by a previous 254subgenomic screen [80], provide important new insights on the host factors involved in HIV-1 255early steps of replication. However, some caution must be taken in interpreting this newly 256available source of information. Firstly, the siRNA screens show only poor overlap: only three

257of the 842 HIV-dependency factors were obtained in all three studies: MED6, MED7 and 258RELA. The reason for this poor overlap lies possibly in differences in the cell lines used 259(HeLa and HEK293T), the multiplicity of siRNA coverage for each gene, the steps of the HIV 260 replication cycle investigated, the time points analyzed, and the filtering thresholds used [79]. 261Secondly, the use of cell lines (i.e. HeLa and HEK293T) that are not usually infected by HIV-2621 and of pseudotyped virions limits the relevance of some of these results. Recently 263however, a genome-wide siRNA-based screen was carried out in Jurkats, thus identifying a 264 further 252 genes involved in HIV-1 infection, only 6 of which were also identified by the 3 265siRNA screens carried out in HeLa and HEK293T [81]. Thirdly, the siRNA screens focus per 266definition on proteins whose functions may be knocked-down without overt cytopathic effect, 267in other words for proteins that are either functionally redundant or that are not essential for 268cellular function. Fourthly, it is likely that many hits represent false positives in terms of 269physiological relevance since the studies only look at virus infection in cell lines as 270 experimental end-point and it is by no means certain that these play significant roles in HIV-1 271infected individuals. These points, together with the partial knockdown nature of RNA 272interference, probably account for the fact that some cellular factors already known to be 273 important for HIV-1 infection were missed by the genome-wide surveys (e.g LEDGF/p75).

274 Despite some limitations, the genome-wide screens and surveys of HIV infection provide 275a good starting point for the identification of cellular targets for HIV therapy. Cellular factors 276that were identified in at least two of the three siRNA screens and are listed in the HIV 277 interaction database represent particularly interesting candidates. Eleven proteins fulfill this 278 criterion: the nucleoporin Nup153, CD4 and CXCR4, the kinases Jak1 and Akt1, the NFkB 279subunit ReIA, four co-factors for HIV-1 accessory and regulatory proteins, and a keratan 280sulfotransferase of HIV-1 envelope [79]. Other interesting candidates are those appearing in 281three or more gene sets from a total of twelve that are currently available for factors identified 282as relevant for HIV replication [79]. In this case, 49 genes fulfill this criterion including Nup98, 283Nup153 and hnRNP1, all of which are thought to play a role in HIV nuclear import, as well as 284TSG101 involved in virion assembly [79]. Proteasomal and lysosomal subunits, chaperones, 285heat shock proteins and transcription/translation factors also constitute multiple hits, but 286whether these are sufficiently important for HIV replication as to constitute a good drug target 287 and can be selectively inhibited without cellular toxicity remains to be determined. These 288 future studies and further improved RNAi-based screens have the potential to identify 289essentially all cellular cofactors required in the different steps of the HIV-1 life cycle and will 290undoubtedly not only greatly improve our understanding of host/HIV interactions but also 291lead to the development of new antiretroviral agents.

#### 2933. Host factors restricting HIV-1 replication

294 It is well appreciated that HIV uses many cellular factors to complete its life cycle. Only in 295 recent years, however, has it become clear that the host cell is not a friendly environment for 296HIV since several host proteins have been identified as intrinsic immunity factors that most 297likely evolved specifically as defense against viral infections [10, 11]. These host restriction 298 factors interfere with retroviral replication by diverse mechanisms and can protect mammals 299 from cross-species transmission of retroviruses. Three classes of retroviral restriction factors 300have so far been identified: cvtidine deaminases (e.g APOBEC3G), which induce lethal 301hypermutations of the retroviral genome [82, 83], Fv1/TRIM5a proteins, which restrict the 302incoming retroviral capsid [84, 85] and tetherin, which impedes the release of nascent HIV 303 virions from the cell surface [14]. Recent analyses have shown that these host restriction 304 factors all evolved under positive selective pressure due to past encounters with ancient 305 viruses [86-89]. Overall, they were obviously quite successful, since a large part of our 306genome (about 8%) consists of silenced retroviral sequences [16] and are still active against 307endogenous and exogenous invaders [90, 91]. Notably, most restriction factors have broad 308antiviral activity and strengthening them may have beneficial effects against different 309pathogens [10, 11, 91].

310APOBEC3G was the first host gene identified as an inhibitor of HIV-1 infection [13]. 311APOBEC3G is a cytidine deaminase that introduces G-to-A substitutions in the HIV-1 312genome, which are detrimental to viral replication (Fig. 2). It has been reported that high 313 levels of hypermutation in the provirus are associated with higher CD4 T cell counts in 314infected individuals [92], although not with reduced viral loads [93, 94]. Accumulating 315evidence suggests that some of the antiretroviral activity of APOBEC3 is independent of its 316mutator activity and may involve direct effects on reverse transcription or integration [11]. An 317 increasing interest is attributed to the therapeutic inhibition of Vif, which antagonizes 318APOBEC3G by proteasome-mediated degradation and blocking its incorporation into 319nascent particles [95, 96]. A different approach would be to boost the intracellular levels of 320APOBEC proteins through interferon-alpha treatment [97, 98], or by targeting the Vif-321APOBEC interaction domain. Alternatively, small molecules may be designed to enhance the 322catalytic activity of APOBEC3G in the cell. However, in order to consider APOBEC family 323 members as potential targets for anti-HIV therapy, it will be important to clarify the relative 324contribution of the enzymatic and non-enzymatic activities of APOBEC to the observed 325 restriction of viral replication, and to elucidate whether these operate mainly in virions prior to 326infection or in the cytoplasm of infected cells [99, 100].

327TRIM5 $\alpha$  proteins block retroviral infection of primate cells in a species-specific manner and 328were originally discovered as important determinants of the resistance of monkey cells to

329HIV-1 infection [12]. The mechanisms that lead to virus inactivation by TRIM5 $\alpha$  proteins are 330not well understood [11]. It is thought, however, that the incoming viral capsids are rapidly 331uncoated upon entry into the cytoplasm of the host cell [101] and that the C-terminus of 332TRIM5 $\alpha$  interacts directly with the viral capsid and determines its antiretroviral specificity 333[101, 102]. HIV-1 is specifically blocked by TRIM5α from Rhesus macaques and Owl 334monkeys, but only weakly restricted by human TRIM5a [84, 85]. Therefore, the therapeutic 335 targeting of TRIM5 $\alpha$  for treatment of HIV-1 infection may be achieved by gene therapy 336mediated delivery of rhesus or owl monkey TRIM5α variants. Since these proteins are not 337human, a concern may be that modified cells would be eliminated by an immune response in 338treated patients. Furthermore, it remains to be elucidated whether HIV-1 can develop 339resistance against the monkey TRIM5α variants. Recently, chimeric forms of human-rhesus 340and human-owl TRIM5α were reported to restrict HIV-1 in transduced primary cells and in 341humanized mouse models [103, 104], thus validating chimeric forms of TRIM5α as potential 342candidates for anti-HIV-1 gene therapy. Alternatively, it may be possible to develop 343 compounds that promote the binding of TRIM5 $\alpha$  to HIV-1 capsids or interact directly with the 344 capsids to inactivate them. Finally, it is noteworthy that other members of the TRIM family, 345such as TRIM22, may have activity against HIV-1 [105, 106]. Thus, the induction of some 346TRIM proteins may help to limit HIV-1 replication.

347The most recently identified restriction factor, tetherin (also known as BST-2, CD317, or 348HM1.24), inhibits viral spread by "tethering" fully formed mature virions on infected cell 349surfaces and preventing them from budding [14, 15]. Tetherin has broad antiviral activity: it 350inhibits a wide range of retroviruses as well as filo- and arenaviruses. Pandemic HIV-1 351strains use their Vpu protein to antagonize tetherin [14, 15, 107]. In comparison, SIVs that 352 lack a vpu gene counteract this restriction factor by their multi-functional accessory Negative 353 factor (Nef) proteins [108, 109] and HIV-2 and Ebola viruses seem to antagonize tetherin by 354their envelope glycoproteins [110-112]. The mechanisms by which these viral factors 355antagonize tetherin are not well understood but Vpu seems to sequester tetherin from the 356site of budding [14, 112], reduce its surface expression [15] and promote its beta-TrCP2-357dependent proteasomal degradation [113, 114]. The expression of tetherin is inducible by 358 interferon alpha (IFN $\alpha$ ) and high surface levels of tetherin suppress virus release even in the 359presence of Vpu [15, 88]. Therefore, one possible therapeutic approach would be to enhance 360tetherin expression by treatment with IFN $\alpha$ . It has been reported that IFN $\alpha$  treatment in mice 361 increases the levels of tetherin expression at the cell surface [115]. In early studies, 362 recombinant IFN $\alpha$  has been used as a potential therapeutic for AIDS-associated Kaposi's 363sarcoma caused by HHV-8 and some patients showed reduced HIV plasma viremia [116]. 364Although IFN $\alpha$  levels are high in acute HIV-1 infection [117], evidence suggests that

365impaired type I interferon production is observed in AIDS patients [118]. A major problem 366with IFN-α treatment is that it has both beneficial effects - because it inhibits viral replication - 367but also harmful consequences as it contributes to the high levels of immune activation that 368drive progression to AIDS. Alternatively, tetherin expression and/or activity may be enhanced 369with the use of a compound drug. Interestingly, the cholesterol-binding compound inhibitor 370amphotericin B methyl ester (AME), previously shown to potently inhibit HIV-1 replication 371[119], was recently shown to interfere with the anti-tetherin function of Vpu [120]. Notably, 372recent data show that only the Vpu proteins of pandemic HIV-1 group M (major) but not of 373non-pandemic HIV-1 group O (outlier) strains efficiently antagonize tetherin [107]. Thus, 374efficient induction of tetherin may not only inhibit viral replication but potentially also reduce 375the rate of sexual transmission of HIV-1.

Accumulating data suggest that a number of restriction factors that interfere with primate 376 377 lentiviral replication and are counteracted by other viral accessory genes remain to be 378identified [10, 11]. For example, the HIV-1 Vpr and the HIV-2 Vpx proteins bind DCAF1 379(VprBP) to engage the Cullin4 E3-ubiquitin ligase complex [121-123]. This interaction seems 380to be required for the ability of Vpx to antagonize an as-yet-unknown host restriction in 381human macrophages and dendritic cells [124,125]. Thus, the major function of the majority of 382the HIV accessory genes seems to be the antagonism of intrinsic immunity factors. However, 383HIV-1 also evolved sophisticated mechanisms to manipulate cellular trafficking, signal 384transduction and gene expression. In particular, the accessory viral Nef protein is well known 385 for its ability to interact with a large variety of cellular factors in order to render the infected 386cell and their environment more conducive to viral replication and to facilitate viral immune 387evasion [10, 11, 126, 127]. Intact nef genes are required for efficient HIV-1 replication in 388infected individuals and are associated with accelerated disease progression. Thus, agents 389disrupting the interaction of Nef with its cellular targets may have beneficial effects on the 390clinical course of infection.

391

#### **3924. Conclusions and future directions**

393Altogether the recent scientific advances demonstrate that the interaction between HIV-1 and 394its human host is far more complex than previously anticipated. The identification of 395numerous cellular factors that are exploited by HIV-1 at essentially every step of its 396replication cycle provides a large number of potential targets for antiretroviral therapy. 397However, a major challenge remains to separate the wheat from the chaff and important 398questions must be addressed before the bulk of this knowledge can be translated into clinical 399applications; e.g. which cellular factors are obligatory for HIV-1 replication in the relevant 400primary cell types *in vivo*?; which essential interactions between viral and host factors can be

401blocked without significant side effects?; which obligatory HIV-dependency factors can be 402knocked-out without important physiological consequences? Moreover, the identification of a 403potential target does not necessarily translate into the development of a therapeutic 404molecule. The "druggability" of a candidate protein [128] depends both on its propensity to be 405pharmacologically targeted — ideally an enzymatic domain whose endogenous binding 406partner can be out-competed by a small drug molecule — and on its ability to be efficiently 407delivered into target cells. While much work still remains to be done, further studies on the 408host proteins involved in HIV replication and their inhibition or elimination are highly 409warranted, particularly since virological and clinical analyses of the HIV-1-infected individual 410that received the  $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$  allogenic stem cell transplantation provide proof-of-concept 411evidence that such strategies can achieve long-term control of viral replication in the absence 412of antiretroviral therapy [39, 41].

413It is conceivable that HIV-1 has evolved to efficiently antagonize those host defenses that are 414most relevant for its control. As discussed above, our current knowledge suggests that 415intrinsic host restriction factors are usually quite effective against retroviruses. Thus, it will be 416interesting to further assess whether the efficient induction of these natural antiretroviral 417factors may overwhelm their viral antagonists and thus allow HIV-1-infected individuals to 418gain better control over viral replication. Finally, we should also consider that non-human 419primates naturally infected with SIV avoid disease progression not because they are able to 420efficiently control viral replication but because they show limited immune activation and 421preserved mucosal immunity [129, 130]. Thus, not only strategies aiming to reduce viral 423activation should be evaluated. Altogether, the recent scientific advances in our 424understanding of viral pathogenesis and on the cellular factors promoting or restricting HIV 425replication hold great promise for the development of improved treatment and prevention 426strategies.

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#### 846FIGURE LEGENDS

**Fig. 1.** Viral replication cycle and the steps currently inhibited by HAART. Viral proteins 848involved in the individual steps are indicated in black and antiretroviral agents blocking them 849in blue.

**Fig. 2.** Intrinsic host restriction factors and their viral antagonists. As schematically indicated, 851TRIM5α interacts with the incoming HIV-1 capsids and may induce accelerated uncoating by 852proteasomal degradation. The accessory viral Vif protein binds to a Cullin5-based ubiquitin 853ligase complex and to APOBEC3G (3G) to induce the degradation of the latter in 854proteasomes. In the absence of Vif, APOBEC3G is incorporated into the budding virions and 855causes lethal G to A hypermutations of the retroviral genome in the next round of infection. 856Tetherin prevents the release of nascent mature viral particles from the cell surface and is 857antagonized by Vpu. The exact mechanism by which Vpu counteracts tetherin remains to be 858identified but may involve direct interaction and beta-TrCP2-dependent degradation of 859tetherin leading to its sequestration from budding virions.

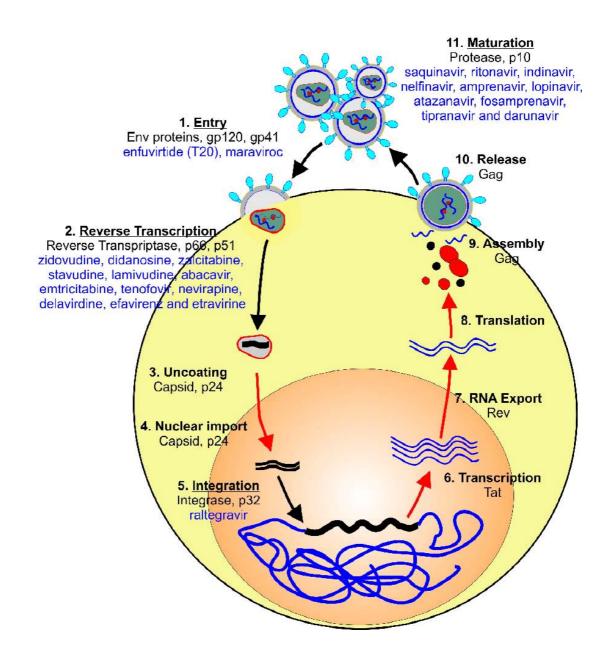
#### 860Table 1: Selected host factors involved in HIV-1 infection.

<u>861</u>

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE
Surface molecules	Clusters of differentiation; Integrins; Chemokines; MHC; Lectins;
	Syndecans; Inositol triphosphate receptor
Endocytosis	Caveolin; Clathrin; COPI system of vesicular transport
Intracellular receptors	Steroid receptors; Nuclear receptors
Signaling	Ras family; Tyrosine and serine/threonine kinases; Phosphatases; cAMP
	Phosphodiesterases
Cytoskeleton	Actin, microtubule, and intermediate filament components and associated
	proteins
Proteasomal degradation	Proteasome subunits; Ubiquitin-conjugating enzymes, -ligases and other
	associated proteins
Lysosomal degradation	Breakdown enzymes; vacuolar ATPases
Nuclear import	Nucleoporins; Karyopherins; Ran binding proteins
Chromatin	Histones; Histone clusters; Histone deacetylases; Chromatin modifying
	proteins; Regulators of DNA repair/telomere length
Transcription & DNA binding	Transcription factors; Co-activators; Transcription elongation factors; RNA
	polymerases; Mediator complex; DNA binding proteins
Nuclear export	RNA export factors; Nuclear Export Signal dependent transport
RNA splicing	Splicing factors
Translation & RNA binding	Translation initiation factors; Translation elongation factors; RNA
	helicases; Ribonuclear proteins; Ribosome-associated; Protein ER
	translocation
Protein assembly/ Protein-protein	Tripartite motif proteins; Ankyrin repeat domains; Heat shock proteins;
interactions	chaperones
Protein modifications	Acetyltransferases; Myristoyltransferases; Peptidases; Proteases
Metabolism	Isomerases; Glycosyltransferases; Convertases; Phospholipases and other
	metabolic enzymes
Apoptosis	Inducers of apoptosis
Cell cycle & proliferation	Cyclins, Cyclin-dependent kinases; Cell division control proteins
Multivesicular body formation	ESCRT machinery; synaptic proteins
Cytokines & secreted proteins	Interleukins; Tumor necrosis factor
Others	Antioxidants/metal binding; Ion channels; Complement

864Shown are examples of host factors identified more than once in databases of host proteins whose 865knock-down attenuates HIV-1 infection, of single-nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) proposed to be 866associated with disease progression, and of host proteins reported to interact with one or more viral 867component [7, 8, 9, 75-79]. The list is not complete and the relevance of most of these cellular factors 868in primary HIV-1-infected cells remains to be confirmed.

# Arhel & Kirchhoff, Fig.1



#### Arhel & Kirchhoff, Fig. 2

